

Flair's guile cramps style

Over the past 10 years, there is virtually nothing inside a wrestling ring that Ric Flair hasn't done well. There is virtually no opponent that Flair couldn't carry to a good match.

But on Sunday night's "Starrcade '90" pay-per-view card from St. Louis, Flair finally met his match. Himself.



**GRUNT
AND
GRIN**

BY DAVE MELTZER
FOR THE NATIONAL

Flair, who has probably the most distinctive style of any active wrestler, was in the position of trying to hide his identity. He was under a mask as the Black Scorpion in a National Wrestling Alliance world title match against Sting inside a cage. The mysterious Scorpion, who made his entrance by descending from the arena's ceiling in a flying saucer-like device, had vowed to unmask if he didn't win the championship. Since virtually all of Flair's mannerisms — from his moves to the way he falls, even down to his walk — are deeply etched in the minds of all NWA fans, he had to adopt a different style.

As far as hiding his mannerisms, Flair was uncanny. But he still couldn't completely fool the crowd, as in the background, you could hear fans chant "Whooo," "Ric," and "Nature Boy." And trying to hide all his moves left him with almost nothing to work with.

Officially, Sting pinned The Scorpion in 18 minutes, 31 seconds with a flying body press to retain the title. Because Flair wrestled with the biggest handicap of all, the inability to be himself, the match was uncharacteristically lackluster. Each of Flair's previous 14 matches on pay-per-view had been very good, many of them classics. But Sunday's match was below average, and by the time the mask came off, revealing Flair, it was anticlimactic.

The best bout of the 14-match show was a bloody "street fight," with Doom (Ron Simmons and Butch Reed) retaining its championship, going to a double-pin draw with Arn Anderson and Barry Windham in 7:19. The only title change saw Lex Luger regain the U.S. title from Stan Hansen in what was billed as a lariat match.

Several duos from foreign countries, including the first legitimate Soviet wrestlers to work as professionals in the U.S., were part of an international tag-team tournament named for former NWA champ Pat O'Connor. Rick and Scott Steiner of the U.S. defeated the Great Muta and Masa Saito from Japan in the finals. Muta and Saito had defeated the Soviets — Salman Hashimikov and Victor Zangiev — in the semifinals.

ETC: "Starrcade" drew 6,357 fans for a total gate of \$93,425. . . Jacques Rougeau is returning to the WWF in the guise of a Canadian mounted policeman. . . Andre the Giant, who was scheduled to return to the WWF at the Jan. 19 Royal Rumble pay-per-view, suffered a broken blood vessel in his leg while touring Japan and is doubtful for the show. . . Tennessee promoter Jerry Jarrett will bring weekly Friday night wrestling back to the Dallas Sportatorium starting Dec. 28.

The Grunt 'n' Grin column appears every Tuesday.

Chad
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